

OUR OBJECTS - contemporary ceramics in context

6th March – 10th April 2009

Mackintosh Gallery

Exhibition preview: 6-8pm, Friday 6 March

Our Objects is the first dedicated ceramics exhibition in a major gallery in Scotland for many years. The exhibition brings an exciting collection of both new work and museum pieces into the historic surroundings of the Mackintosh Gallery and offers a timely re-evaluation and rediscovery of the medium.

Featuring an international line up of ceramicists including: Richard Slee; Alison Britton; Hans Stofer; Xavier Toubes; Anders Ruhwald; Dawn Youll; Barnaby Barford; and James Rigler, the artists in the show are a disparate group at various stages in their careers. The works in this exhibition represents a broad range of concerns, styles and making schools. What links these artists is their simultaneous regard and defiance for tradition; they all continue to evolve work that owes a great debt to tradition.

Parallel to the contemporary pieces will be a selection of historical objects. These items have come from various sources – national museums, private collections, a traditional workshop in Afghanistan and e-bay. Acting as foils, the new works are paired with old.

This exhibition is not intended to be a survey show of contemporary ceramics, but a selection of makers who illustrate a range of contexts for the material, and demonstrate ways in which techniques are manipulated to readdress the mediums history.

The exhibition has been curated by Katy West, herself a practitioner. Her enthusiasm for contemporary and historical ceramics, and an awareness of the lack of exposure for international ceramics in Scotland have both been driving factors in the exhibitions conception. Scotland has a long tradition of ceramic production, in both a craft and fine art context and this exhibition hopes to rekindle this interest both for professionals and for the general public.

In conjunction with the exhibition there will be a series of talks, a panel discussing issues relating to the exhibition and workshops led by exhibitors. For details please contact the exhibitions department at The Glasgow School of Art.

For additional information and press images, please contact Gráinne Rice and Talítha Kotzé in the Exhibitions department at The Glasgow School of Art on 0141 353 4525 or email g.rice@gsa.ac.uk and t.kotze@gsa.ac.uk; or Katy West (Curator) on 07815902976 or katy@katywest.co.uk

INFORMATION ON THE ARTISTS

Anders Ruhwald

Ruhwald's work is like a domestic bad dream. In *Social Piece of Furniture* sociability is tested by the extremity of the object. With some of the pieces there is the malign feeling that this is not sculpture to contemplate, but sculpture that is watching you: it is *unheimlich* in the extreme. He uses function and the domestic as starting points to make work that question our assumption of the everyday objects we come into contact with.

Danish born Ruhwald is based mostly in London though currently Artist-in-Residence and Head of Department at Cranbrook Academy of Art, Detroit.

<http://www.ruhwald.net/en/1.html>

Richard Slee

Richard Slee finds inspiration in the diversity of ornamental ceramic traditions, from 18th century Sèvres porcelain and 19th century curios to more recent pottery knick-knacks. The works are frequently wry comments on social issues, either political or more broadly cultural. If there is a single quality that draws together Slee's diverse body of work, it is the humanity and tenderness with which he treats his subjects. A humanity that is given all the more power by his penetrating, surreal, hyper-real, vision of the ordinary around him.

Drunk Punch, by Slee is on loan from the V&A museum. He is based in London and head of ceramics at Camberwell College of Art.

<http://www.bmgallery.co.uk/>

Dawn Youll

Dawn Youll explores themes of urban ubiquity through ceramic forms. She is drawn to a material that can signify domesticity and to its historical association with representing the world outside and bringing it inside. It can communicate, through ornamentation, evoking feelings such as sentimentality, and so its function as a representation of a subject can change. She is interested in this shift; when things become so familiar they take on other meanings. Youll gathers glimpses of the urban environment and literally lays them on the table. Individual elements are recorded as ceramic objects, as an investigation into how we view and interact with our surroundings.

Based in Glasgow, Youll has recently completed an MA in ceramics at Cardiff University \

<http://www.dawnyoull.co.uk/>

Barnaby Barford

Barnaby Barford takes a unique approach to his work with ceramics. Despite being an accomplished craftsman, he chooses to work primarily with found objects. Starting off with a selection of mass-manufactured and antique figurines that most people would, on principal, dismiss, he starts to chop and change them, adding pieces on, and gluing them together, to create sinister and deeply sardonic sculptures. □□By using sentimental figurines as the characters in these twisted narratives, Barford is turning their perceived vulgarity on its head, into a different, more explicit vulgarity. The hackneyed sensibility of traditional ornament becomes the language of political and personal protest. Tradition is reworked and edited. The viewer identifies a familiar object, but must engage with its context, because it is so foreign to that which he/she is familiar with.

Barford, based in London, is represented by David Gill Galleries.

<http://www.barnabybarford.co.uk/>

Hans Stofer

Of his work Stofer says, 'my work is witty and engaging. But there is also a sting in the tail with most of my pieces as I strive to questions our traditional cultural values" This thinking is not dissimilar to that of DADA-the anti-art movement, which flourished earlier in the century. A trained silversmith, Stofer uses his skills to chop and change existing ceramics, often repairing otherwise disgardable ornaments to create tableaux's that owe much to the Victorian era infused with a contemporary sensibility.

German born Hans Stofer is head of Jewellery, silversmithing and metalwork at The Royal College of Art.

<http://www.bmgallery.co.uk/>

James Rigler

James Rigler explores the worth of objects- those distinctions that we create between the extraordinary and the ordinary, the revered and the overlooked. Use, touch and memory can give meaning to even the most humble objects in our lives, upturning the hierarchy that rarity or expense create. The history of clay makes it a perfect material through which to explore this ambiguity. It is both the stuff of the intimate, everyday and domestic- jugs, plates, bowls, cups- and the realm of monumental, grandiose architecture. By creating objects that inhabit the space between these two worlds, he is attempting to shed light on the significance hidden in the most unlikely things.

James is a skilled technician in architectural ceramics and recently completed an MA at the Royal College of Art. He is based in London

<http://www.jamesrigler.co.uk>

Alison Britton

Alison Britton's aesthetic language raises points of discord and harmony, both within and between the compositional elements of angular constructed forms and gestural painted marks. The ultimate goal is to forge these separate strands of thought into a dynamic wholeness. She has written: 'My pots may appear to be the work of someone urban, a person used to attempting the integration of diversity'. These complex and ambiguous vessels offer different layers of meaning. *Sluice*, which will be shown in the exhibition, has been influenced by the time Alison has spent in Istanbul; by the shapes in the architecture, the rich colours present everywhere and her reading of Orhan Pamuk's novel, *My Name is Red*.

Britton has an OBE for her outstanding contribution to studio ceramics, both by what she makes and how she writes on the subject.

<http://www.bmgallery.co.uk/>

Xavier Toubes

Toubes has placed himself as a worker transforming matter into spirit, in a world in which space and time are not totally of the present but also of the past and of the future. Toubes is as opposed to the idolatrous traditionalism of the past as he is to the brutal and abstract progressivism of those who, in wishing to open the doors of the future, are merely compounding the mistakes and shortsightedness of their fictitious present.

Spanish born Toubes is head of ceramics at Chicago institute of Art.

<http://www.dubhecarrenogallery.com>

IMAGES OF A SELECTION OF WORKS



She Global Xavier Toubes 2005



Drunk Punch Richard Slee 1992



Shit! Now I'm gonna be really late Barnaby Barford 2008



A View Dawn Youll 2008

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Social Piece of Furniture 6 Anders Ruhwald 2006



Sluice Alison Britton 2007